

By amch.
notifying by the customer terminal each, respective customer of the points issued to each, respective customer as primary data through the store terminal, and prior to transactions performed by the customer.

63. (NEW) A point management method of a computer and managing points issued to each customer, each customer receiving service according to the issued points, said computer comprising and said point management method comprising the steps of:

accumulating, by the computer, points issued to each, respective customer; and

notifying, by the computer, each, respective customer of the points issued to each, respective customer by one of images, voice, and both, and prior to transactions performed by the customer.

64. (NEW) The point management system according to claim 41, wherein the communication means is installed in a videocart equipped with a display screen device and notifies the customer of the point information sent to a specific area.

REMARKS

In the Office Action mailed March 25, 1996, claims 1-3, 11, 13-18, 21, 22, and 31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over Girouard et al., U.S. Patent No. 4,892,346. The foregoing rejections are traversed.

Further in the subject Action, the Examiner asserted that claims 31/1 will be considered as elected and belonging to Group II, Subgroup A. Therefore, the following claims were elected to continue prosecution in the above-mentioned application: 1-3, 11, 13-18, 21, 22, and 31.

The specification is amended for clarification.

The present invention is a point management system which manages service points issued to customers through customer or store terminals

according to customer's transactions. The service points are used to provide the customers with sales promotion services. The present invention comprises a service point management system for sales promotion services in retail sales, employing a computer for managing points issued to each customer who receives service according to the points. The service point management system of the present invention comprises a point issuer issuing points to the customer according to transactions performed by the customer, a point accumulator calculating and accumulating the issued points, a point notifier notifying the customer of point information, and a customer identifier identifying the customer according to customer identification data entered through a customer or store terminal. In the present invention, the point notifier notifies the customer identified by the customer identifier of the customer's cumulative point information in advance of the sales transaction.

Girouard discloses a computer system and method for automating advertising and promotional campaigns in a mall. The Girouard apparatus includes a magnetic strip card reader, a bar code reader, a monitor, a keyboard, and a touchscreen input device. In the Girouard apparatus, advertisements are displayed on the monitor, which depends upon customers being attracted to the monitor.

At the time that the invention was made, point service was an additional process executed only when cash flow was established. Girouard discloses informing the customer of information, and which may confuse the information during frequent transactions. In the Girouard apparatus, point information is coincidentally included therewith.

Girouard further discloses a "frequent purchaser routine", from which a "view balance routine" can be selected. The results of the execution of the foregoing routines are vague from the disclosure of Girouard.

On the other hand, the "notification means" of the present invention provides a new timing of process to show points to the

customers prior, not subsequent, to their transactions. The foregoing timing also differs from changing or updating point values during usual notification. In the present invention, a new timing for notifying the customers of point information is generated, and it is that process which gives a timing trigger for notification different from that of Girouard. Accordingly, the structure of the present invention patentably distinguishes over Girouard.

Also in contrast to the Girouard apparatus, the present invention does not require the use of a bar code reader (as shown in each of Figures 1-5 of Girouard).

Claims 2, 3, and 11 are amended into independent form. Further, new claims 40-60 are added. Accordingly the following claims are independent claims, in the present application: 1, 2, 3, 11, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, and 63.

Each of the foregoing claims 1, 2, 3, 11, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, and 63 recites that the customer is notified of the issued points prior to the customer carrying out a transaction. The foregoing patentably distinguishes over Girouard.

Each of claims 1, 2, 3, and 11 recites "point notification means for notifying the customer of point information comprising the issued points". In addition, claim 1 of the present application recites "wherein the point notification means notifies the customer of the customer's point information before the customer carries out transactions". Claim 2 of the present application recites "wherein the point notification means notifies the customer of the point information as primary data through the customer terminal as soon as the customer terminal is turned ON". Claim 3 of the present application recites "wherein the point notification means notifies the customer identified by the customer identification means of the point information as primary data through the customer terminal and prior to the transactions". Claim 11 of the present application recites "wherein the point notification means notifies the customer of the

point information by one of images, voice, and both and prior to the transactions".

Each of independent claims 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, and 63 recite limitations similar to claims 1, 2, 3, and/or 11.

The benefit of the new timing notification process adopted by the "notification means" of the present invention promotes dealing. In particular, the customer who is informed of the service point before the transaction, and whose accumulated points are nearing the customer's goal, influence the customer to carry out the transaction, and possibly other transactions, to achieve the customer's goal.

Claims 13-18, 21, 22, 31, 40-53, 55, and 64 depend, either directly or indirectly, from one of the above-mentioned independent claims, and recite further patentably distinguishing features of their own. For example, claim 13/11 recites that the "point notification means" displays "a graph of cumulative points and target points". The benefit of the features recited in claim 13/11 is that the customer is shown graphically the points needed to reach the customer's target.

Withdrawal of the rejections of claims 1-3, 11, 13-18, 21, 22, and 31 under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over Girouard is respectfully requested.

New claims 40-64 are added. Support for new claims 40-64 is found in the specification and drawings. New claims 40-64 patentably distinguish over the subject reference relied upon for the above-mentioned reasons.

Also filed concurrently herewith is a Letter to the Examiner Requesting Approval of Changes to the Drawings, amending Figures 1, 2, 8(A) - 8(B), 10(A) - 21(B), 23, 25(A), 29(B), and 31, for clarification.

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CONCLUSION

The foregoing rejections having been overcome, and new claims 40-64 having been added, the application is in condition for allowance, which action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the U.S. Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington, DC 20231.

on August 26, 1996
STAAS & HALSEY

By: Mary Jones

Date: 8/26/96